

Making a Difference



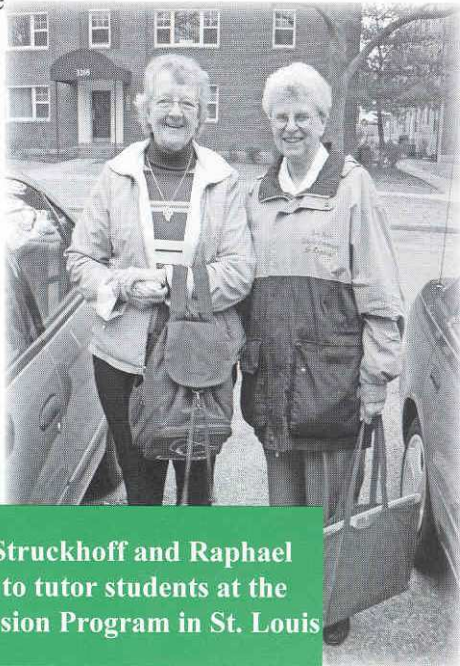
9

“How are you ladies today?” the Sisters are greeted by juvenile officers as they enter the secure school building. The Sisters tutor at an Alternative Suspension Program for 6th through 9th grade students.

Sister Raphael Karnish (called Sister Rae by the students) says these students see a lot of violence and tragedy in their lives. “One of my students has been shot in the leg, has seen his one-year-old nephew killed in a driveby shooting, and witnessed his step-father commit suicide.

The Alternative Suspension Program is housed on the third floor of the building housing the Innovative Concept Academy. Both were developed under the leadership of Judge Jimmie Edwards. Innovative Concept Academy is a first-of-its-kind joint venture between the St. Louis Juvenile Court, which Judge Edwards leads, the St. Louis Public Schools and MERS Goodwill. Judge Edwards asked religious congregations in St. Louis for retired Sisters to help in the school and in the Alternative Suspension Program. Sisters Raphael and Corinne Struckhoff started last October.

Sister Corinne says they try to provide protective oversight for the students. She says, “We provide such a peaceful, calm, learning experience. We don’t demand, we don’t discipline.” The Sisters believe this is their way of giving back for all that they have received. Sister Corinne says, “We have been blessed with an excellent education and opportunities to see children succeed. Now, we want to reach out to youth who need encouragement and a positive influence to continue their schooling. We look into their eyes and see so much sadness, despair and pain. We hope we can make a difference to some of these children.”



Sisters Corinne Struckhoff and Raphael Karnish leaving to tutor students at the Alternative Suspension Program in St. Louis